St Harrison D-4 (1919-1934) 1924 MI Middle East
Bedouin 1934

main away from regions where guests are likely to be numerous. The road between Hofuf, the capital of Hasa, and Oqair, its nearest port, affords excellent pasturage for goats and camels, and water is easily available for watering the stock. The traveler, however, will probably not see so much as one tent in that whole region. Caravans are coming and going continually, and the poor Bedouin cannot possibly entertain so many. Stern necessity compels him to go where the demands on his very slender resources will be smaller.

But the finest hospitality that I have ever enjoyed has been at the hands of the Bedouins. Ten years ago in the vicinity of Kuwait we saw a good deal of them, for there is always a fringe of Bedouin tents surrounding that city. The American missionaries were far from welcome in the town. A rival Turkish doctor had been imported by a local Mohammedan society and stocked with medicines and instruments so the poor might be treated free and every excuse for visiting the missionary's establishment removed. But there was no trace of hostility among the Bedouins and it was a great pleasure to visit their tents. We had a number of patients there and had to visit them often. When the dressings and treatments were finished, we stayed and visited together. There were questions about America, and the way to come from there to Arabia, and I in my turn learned a great deal about them and their utterly poverty-stricken lives. The way in which the medical missionary was admitted to the circle as one of the family is perhaps the most prized memory that twelve years' experience affords.

In the calendar of the desert the real red letter days are those when a wedding in the sheikh's family or some other event is the occasion for a great feast. Every

St Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 MI Middle East Bedouin m34

one is invited, and the half-starved Bedouin, who has perhaps not had a full meal for months, makes such use of his opportunities as seems incredible to a student of anatomy. Four hungry Bedouins are supposed to be able to eat a whole roasted sheep at one sitting, and I am sure that I have seen many such a Bedouin company that would be equal to the task. An Arab feast is an interesting sight. A whole sheep must be cooked for any honored guest, even if he has only one or two attendants. This animal, cooked as he frequently is in one piece, is placed on a huge copper platter and buried in a mountain of boiled rice. Out of the sides of this mountain, which would measure several bushels in bulk and which stands perhaps four feet high, are to be seen protruding the amputated stumps of the animal's four limbs. This enormous central dish is flanked by various side dishes containing gravies and a few vegetables. Vegetables, however, are few in number and scanty in amount. The proportion of cooking fat put on the rice is an index of the cordiality of the guest's welcome. There is quite certain to be several times the amount that a western palate enjoys. Around this mountain of food with its foothills of side dishes the guests seat themselves, all on the floor. The signal is given by the host's remarking, "In the name of God." There follows a mad race against time, for when one guest arises, all must follow his example. Obviously, then, the affair of the moment is to see that in the short time available as much as possible of God's blessings shall be appropriated. The meat is torn off in quarter-pound chunks. Such a piece is put into the mouth, bitten in two and swallowed, if indeed it is treated with so much ceremony. The rice is gathered up in great handfuls and poured down the esophagus, ap-

L. Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 Mil 1 Kuwait Pt. 1
Bridgeman 1434

Women's Picnics

Chap. XVI

Then crowds of women and children go outside the city walls to the neighbouring wells and green oases one or two miles away, and take their lunch and tea with them. Men do not accompany their women on these picnics, but each party of women has some slave women and a little boy or two to keep an eye on sisters and mothers and to call for help if necessary. These picnics are one of the most pleasing sights of Kuwait, for it means that women literally have left their prison houses, and are enjoying the lovely countryside and pure air outside the town. The picnics are very simple and well-behaved affairs, and those taking part appear to be happy in the extreme. If these picnics take place well away from any beaten tracks, a certain amount of quiet and decorous dancing also goes on. The women form circles, and whilst one of them starts to let down her hair and dance or sway about in sitting posture, her friends will sing pretty songs and keep time for her. Occasionally a woman slave, who has brought out a small drum, contributes a monotonous drum-beating. Should a man or horseman appear in the offing, singing and dancing is stopped and all become as quiet as mice, till he has passed by.

Occasionally, but not often, a few women of the unfortunate type are allowed to go out in a party for a picnic at *'Id*, but they keep well away from their more respectable sisters, and are never allowed to have men in their company. The official idea is that the festival is an equally happy one for them, and they also are entitled to be carefree and joyful.*

'ID AMONG THE TRIBES

The *'Id* in the desert, as in the town, is an occasion of rejoicing, feasting and paying calls. The people, being poorer and more simple, celebrate the festival with less display and expense. Horse races and camel races are held, however, and if men happen to have spare ammunition, they will have shooting matches.

The unmarried tribal girls go in perhaps for more dancing than their town sisters, and before noon and of an evening groups of them will get inside a tent, let down their hair and, after closing the tent

* In 1938 prostitutes were forbidden to leave the city, and even these picnic outings were prohibited.

h Dickson G-4 (1939-47) 1951 MI I Kuwait
Bedouins 1634

527 curtains, will start their picturesque tribal dances. Elderly women and
535 most of the married ones refrain from dancing, as it is considered unseemly, but the young ones revel in it, and more often than not the young lads of the tents who are related to the dancers are allowed to watch the performance from a decorous distance. This offers them the coveted chance of getting a peep at the face of their future bride.

This girl-dancing continues for only seven days, and is then scrupulously discontinued as savouring of immodesty and worldliness.

My wife and I have always made a point of camping for part of the *'Id* celebrations with various of our Badawin friends, and I have been privileged on several occasions to see Mutair, 'Awazim and Ruhaida girls dance. But this privilege has only been extended to me at *'Id* times, never on other occasions. Curiously enough, the fathers of the young women never like to be present, and only lads closely related to the girls, not outsiders, are allowed to look on from a distance. Usually three girls at a time will dance, and they are accompanied by a sing-song chant of the elder women, who stand around and clap their hands to keep time. The dancers discard their *'abbas* and *burqas* and, decked out in all their brilliantly coloured *thaubs* or long flowing undergarments, hop about in short straight-legged jerks, at the same time gracefully swinging their heads from side to side or in circular motion to make their hair fly. The girls often carry a small cane which they hold with one tip in each hand. If they have no such cane they will cover the lower part of their face with one hand, as if out of modesty, or will hold a piece of their sleeve in front of their mouth. Each girl dances till she is exhausted; when tired she stops, puts her *'abba* over her head once more and sits down. Some are very attractive to watch.

Tribal men do not dance in their own homes at all. It is considered irreligious and unmanly to do so, and savours of the low-class *Sulubba*. This taboo does not apply to the *'ardha* described above, which is a war dance in which the highest in the land may take part. On many occasions the great Ibn Sa'ud himself has joined in the dance, and gained thereby the favour rather than the criticism of his people.

527 The following five songs are given as examples of tribal dance-
533 songs sung by the elder women as the younger ones dance. They are selected at random from many which my wife and I heard and noted

L Dickson G-6 (1939-47) 1951 MI I Kuwait
Bedouins 1454

when in camp. I have found them very difficult to translate, for there is a great deal of local patois in the text. 527 538

I

SONG OF MUTAIRI WOMEN 539 539

(After the surrender by the English of Faisal al Duwish to Ibn Su'ud)

(Each verse is sung four times by the chorus)

Yo galbi illi ghaiis khurbih
Haddar as sama, hass tayara.

Tayaraain shaiir Al Duwish
Ma'ad Yirja illa Diyara.

Wa hareema fi arruf al 'Ashish
Wa ukhta a lal hadam Sabara.

Translation.

Oh my heart (expressing fear) you are become mad, for
Under the sky is heard the sound of the aeroplane.

Two aeroplanes have carried off the Duwish,
Never again will he return to his homeland.

His women now sit disconsolate among the huts made of reeds,
While his sister has been driven to break her heart.

II

SONG OF 'AWAZIM WOMEN

(Each verse repeated four times)

Abbé tamanna lét man yirkab al Tiyar
Al mastar 'al Saiyid la sahburiyah.

Abbé sahab aleh illi sahuda, ma'ai bu Kabar
Wa abbe sahash hiba, yam al diyar al Shamaliyah.